



DRUGNET IN PURSUIT OF CYBERSPACE DRUG DEALERS

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... agents prepare for takedown



Prosecutor Barbara Cohan in front of the Federal Courthouse at Sixth and Market. She grew to appreciate the scope of what DEA and FBI had done.

BETRAYAL from A12
CHANTILLY, VA.
 "Chin straps on!"
 SOD agents used this gung-ho phrase to psych themselves up for raids.
 Now, as folks from Philadelphia, New York, Washington, India, Costa Rica and Hungary gathered at SOD's unmarked building near Dulles Airport, someone invoked the mantra.
 Barb rolled her eyes.
 Yet over the next few hours, Barb's contempt melted.
 As agent after agent outlined the case and the takedown, Barb grew to appreciate the scope of what DEA, FBI and IRS had done, and the challenges everyone faced on arrest day:
 Agents planned to execute a global sweep, timed for dawn April 19 on the East Coast, dusk April 20 in India. Twenty people, maybe more, would be arrested, ideally all at once. Authorities would seize bank accounts in 11 countries.
 Timing was paramount. Given the computer savvy of the targets, one premature arrest might tip conspirators to flee or, with the click of a mouse, transfer millions to untouchable overseas accounts.
 In Philadelphia, Akhil Bansal would be arrested with his roommate and righthand man, Atul Patil. In New York, agents would grab David and Elizabeth Armstrong, who supervised the shipping depot. In India, agents would arrest Akhil's father, sister and four others.
 The Bansals' best clients, the online pharmacy operators, would be busted, too: a radio personality in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; a high-flying couple in Sarasota, Fla.; a pair of Texans who taught English overseas; some Germans who ran strip clubs in Costa Rica; an Indian running Web sites from Toronto; and a Rochester, N.Y., man who stashed his money in Ireland.
 As the briefing neared conclu-



Akhil Bansal had found a way to start out on his own: offering U.S. doctors the use of Indian transcribers.

sion, she heard an agent say *Chin straps on!* Barb chafed at the machismo.
 But now, she had to admit, she felt goosebumps, too.
ROXBOROUGH
 "Here's what we'll do."
 After some good sleep and a return to classes, Akhil's entrepreneurial drive revived. He laid out his new plan to Foram.
 First, he would not quit Temple. He would complete the semester, his summer internship at Mercy Hospital, and his final semester that fall. He would earn his MBA and the master's in health-care finance.
 Next, he would turn the pill business over to his sister. Let her try to run it from India.
 Finally, he would start his own business. He wanted to take advantage of the global market's hottest industry, outsourcing.
 Akhil planned to buy two American medical-transcription companies. He planned to replace the American typists with cheaper English speakers in India, and use the time difference to his advantage: Au-

dio from an American doctor's dictated diagnosis could be e-mailed to India in the evening U.S. time and be transcribed by the next morning.
 Akhil also wanted to bring his parents to Philadelphia, at least for the summer. His father would receive better medical care here, and he could help proofread the transcribers' work.
 Proceeds from the pill network would finance the deal. Akhil would go legit.
 Negotiations were going well. One company could be bought for \$400,000, another for \$220,000.
 The whole family — Akhil, his parents, his fiancée — would remain in the United States as long as possible. Then they would all move back to the gleaming, \$425,000 condo the good son had bought them in a swank New Delhi suburb.
 Akhil had it all figured out.
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